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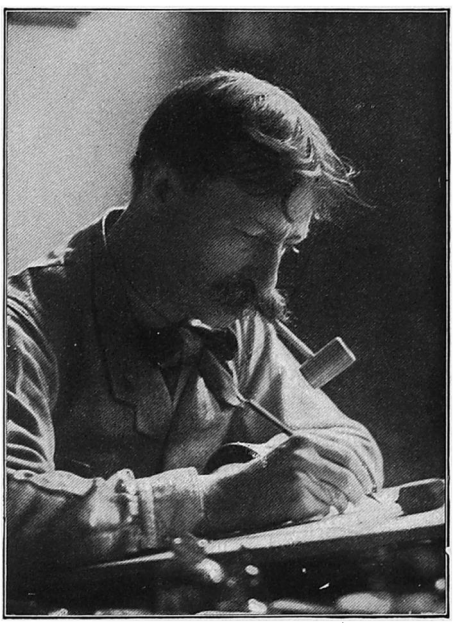
BRUSH AND PENCIL

VOL. XII SEPTEMBER, 1903 No. 6

CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

In no other field has the real fitness of things to their uses been so flagrantly disregarded as in the making of books for children. The educators were the first to discover this remission and brought about a reform in the text, at least for that period of childhood that comes under their care, although their revisions might have been carried further. Then came a great innovation in the decoration and illustration, and the interest in the subject has become so great that now every big book-shop has its children's counter, as a matter of course, just as do other kinds of shops. The greatest illustrators turned their attention to this field and the result was that a whole school of illustration for children arose in England, many brilliant men engaged in this work in France, Germany, and America, and we now have a few little masterpieces from each of the countries here named.



W. W. DENSLOW
From a Photograph

Nearly every child's classic has been put into attractive form, and many special endeavors have been made in them to put forth works of art for the delectation of the child mind. A noble movement this has been, and one very logical to the trend of modern educational methods, which have emphasized, through Froebel and others, that child culture is the most vital point in our social organization, and the place where good seed planted brings forth the greatest harvest.

But a most important point in educational method has been missed in these art attempts for children—that the art must be reduced to the child's understanding to be of any real value or enjoyment to him.

Very few people realize that the great majority of illustrations in the books of this class are not for children, but of children. It takes some thinking for the average person to comprehend that this applies to even such exquisitely artistic books as those of Boutet de Monvel, one of the pioneers of the new movement, and still its leader in France. These are most admirable effects for a developed sense for exquisite form and refined color in a grown person of cultivated tastes. But

REFRESHMENTS FOR ONE
By W. W. Denslow

have they the power of going straight to the heart of a child? The decorative compositions on the pages of "Jeanne d'Arc" are surely too subtle for him, and does he really care for the charming and delicate humor in the pictures in "Chansons pour Enfants"? The illustrations in these volumes are simple, but it is the cultured simplicity of Puvis de Chavannes, who said, "It is difficult to be simple."

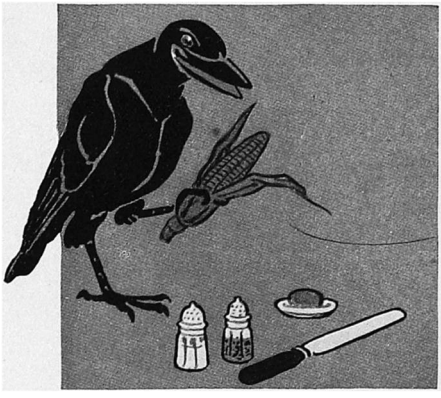
To really enjoy M. de Monvel's work requires an educated eye. It is not even the unconscious, crude simplicity of a more childish age in the history of art, for instance, in the Italian painters. Indeed, the modern child might enjoy the quaint and naïve conceptions in some of these early paintings, especially the pictures of heaven and hell, with the semi-humorous monsters, not at all terrible to us, and the amusing active little devils.

Many of the rich decorative compositions in illustration of child legends and fairy tales as done by the English group of designers of children's books are stunning phantasms of the complex imagination of maturity, the outgrowth of years of worldly observation and scientific unfoldment, but what does the child feel from conceptions which must seem to him the very outcome of subliminal and occult knowledge, even though it is expressed in a coarse and strong "wood-cut

line,'' which attempts childish simplicity by imitating the crude early illustrated books? All this does not prevent the work of these men from being genuine, artistic, and valuable contributions to the world's store of treasures, but do children really enjoy them? In part it is the old question of the subject in art, Why are all pictures of children, simply because of their subject, assumed to be attractive to children?

IN HOLIDAY TOGS
By W. W. Denslow

The child's taste is made up of strict embryonic logic, and extreme narrow experience and readiness to exult and expand by recognition of its little knowledge. In educating it, the only natural plan to follow is the line of its pleasure, with an extra touch of strange knowledge for his surprise and exuberance that will lead the experience a little further. But always must the new touch be a logical outgrowth of what he knows and loves, and always must the old be known to be what he does impulsively love, not what it seems to us he should. For the first five senses are primal and pure, having no instinct but the racial one, and they follow the channel made for them like water; that is, up to the time which constitutes average development—not beyond into special talent. But it is the average child, not the unusual one, that is the concern of educators. The average dominates all measures.



PERHAPS FROM KANSAS
By W. W. Denslow

All children love color and humor. These are the first faculties he uses in looking at a book, and he undoubtedly prefers vivid colors to soft tones. But let no one imagine, because it is as necessary to reduce the color schemes to the child's comprehension as it is to reduce the text to words of one syllable, that the principles of good color composition can be neglected. He prefers vivid and striking colors, but in order that he or any one else may get the full effect of a brilliant spot or mass, it must be intelligently placed; not haphazardly in the

JUST A TOT
By W. W. Denslow

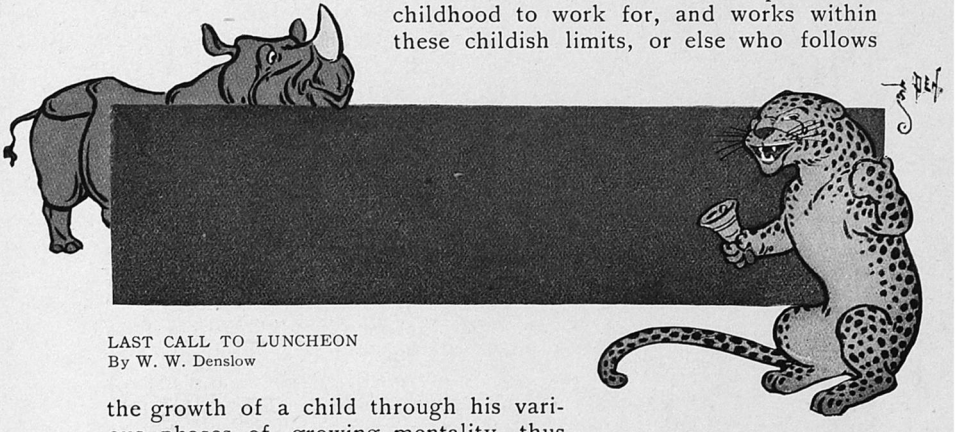
midst of other strong colors, but with a full knowledge of the use of grays and the law of contrast. It takes as much experience and knowledge to be truly simple for a child's mind and eye as to be architecturally simple in a Chavannes mural painting. The true child artist labors under the added difficulty of being obliged to work a palette limited to strong colors. The baby goes for vivid color, effectively used, if for no other reason than that he sees it first. Advertisers seeking to catch the eye of children of a larger growth recognize this to such extent that in the designers' room of a certain large manufacturer of cards and posters, the color red has been nicknamed "the secret."

To offer a child the old monstrosities of picture-books, many of which are still on the market, is to insult him, and to endanger the education of his eye. They are of no use one way or the other, for the crowding together of primary colors not only outrages the color sense, but is not practical, for he cannot see one color for another. Bad art, if there is such a thing, is worse than no art. It simply implants something that must be uprooted later. The grotesque wit in these infantile "penny dreadfuls" overshoots the mark, and he cannot understand. He believes what he can verify in his experience, or accept intuitively by his joy, nothing else. To overpower him, disgusts him, and in no sphere is clearness of perception so essential to the clearness of thought as in the pictured wit in his nursery books. Clear English is good English, and genuinely clear fun and color is good art. Since the aim of childish wit is to start thought through the imagination, great pains must be given that the humorous expressions are natural and logical, else if they reach his mind at all, it will be to make

WHAT RIDING HOOD MET
By W. W. Denslow

him ask, "Why?" Examine closely the quality of that question—whether it asks for more knowledge and a correspondnig expression of the pleasure, or whether it asks in a naïve, unconscious hint to put the book aside? For a child is easily bored, but never without cause.

In the child's first books color and wit should go hand in hand. His eye and his joyousness are the eminent signs of his intellect at this period, and the decorator who puts them forth most simply, and plausibly, and amusingly, and correctly gets the child public, and the one who either chooses one period of childhood to work for, and works within these childish limits, or else who follows



LAST CALL TO LUNCHEON
By W. W. Denslow

the growth of a child through his various phases of growing mentality, thus working progressively in both art and nature, still keeping strictly within the boundaries of the child's world, is the one who is and will be a public benefactor of children. For children *must* have art—they must select it, and own it, and invent it, through, first of all, grasping it with their first sense of the outer world.

Art for young babies is another problem, but of equal importance to any one who has watched a baby's mind unfold, nothing can be too good for these precious first impressions. This is the period, of course, where color does its single office, as the baby snatches at that alone. But a book rightly prepared should be able to serve from infancy to probably five years, without changing its point of view. However, it is not possible for an artist to make such a book unless he comprehends all the gradual and essential movements of the child mind, and most of all the spiritual thread that holds him consistently from the cradle to his enfranchisement into full speech—that is, the wit of his little life. And the wit seems to be from perennial times, the making of things to perform antics before him.

Such an artist, it seems to me, is W. W. Denslow, the subject of this paper, and the cause of all these speculations. He has a consist-

ent, serious theory under which he works, and a strong personality to back it, both of which are well worth considering, especially as he is achieving great practical success. The time will come when illustrations in color in periodicals will be almost as common as the black-and-white one sees now, but until then writers on art subjects will always groan at the loss of this great element in the reproduction of things they write about. Especially does it seem hard in the present instance, when in trying to point out the art that pleases babies, I can only speak of the color in the splendid panel of rich, soft red over which the rhinoceros looks at the leopard on page 381, the mysterious blue used as a background to the "Jack" group on page 383, the striking decorative color scheme in "The Zoo" head-band on page 378, and the cleverly disposed spots and masses of color scattered throughout the Denslow books. I have seen a baby of twelve months beam with delight as some of these pages were turned, and fairly jump at color deliberately placed by the crafty Mr. Denslow, who knows how to arouse these little emotions. The baby is not aware of it, but a wide knowledge of reproductive color processes, and a strict watch of the mechanical work on his books, especially for purity of color in inks used, plays a great part in Denslow's ability, as does his acquaintance with value of white paper upon which he does not print at all. This is a means of gaining an effect which less practical artists neglect. Were the baby or young child able to analyze and explain to us the causes of his delight in color, it might reason as follows: "Den's panels, circles, and spots, and his solid pages of gorgeous hues with perhaps one tiny figure or object in a lower corner are simply baits to catch

THE SOCIABLE EGG
By W. W. Denslow

my attention through my eye, which as yet gets only general impressions. In other words, my friend Mr. Denslow is an impressionist for babies. He omits all but fundamentals and essentials. He leaves out of his books everything except things that exist in our own little world of fact."

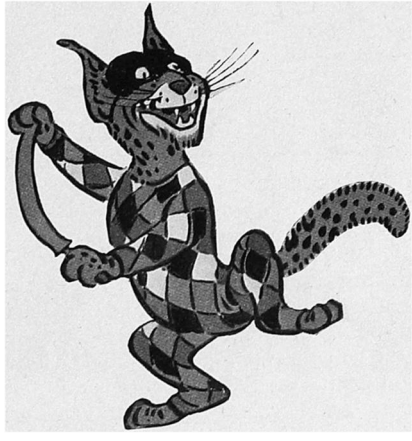
In more technical terms, first come the extreme color simplicities, the primary colors used strictly within the laws of harmony — unlike the usual run of toy books — and both modified and intensified by a knowing use of grays. No patterned backgrounds distract the eye, or are allowed to conflict with the main impression of the design, a point not always observed in Mr. Walter Crane's superb tapestry-like compositions for his toy children's books.

JACK AND THE PEDDLER MAN
By W. W. Denslow

The expression of humor in this first period would be the animal joy of child action, or the grotesqueness of animals acting like a child, or at least like the comprehended actions of "big people." The examples of this in Denslow's books are almost innumerable; the tea-drinking tiger on page 378, the cow on page 383 astonished and horrified at being sold for a hatful of beans, the crow on page 379 eating his corn with salt and butter, the reckless-looking dancing lynx on page 384, and the worried goat that has apparently lost something, on page 379, as good in its way as anything of Sir John

Tenniel's in "Alice in Wonderland." I remember a walrus on an end-paper of one of the newest books which is a masterpiece, with some of "Den's" sly, sardonic touches in his make-up and surrounding, a sly reading between the lines, as it were, introduced without making it one whit the less a child's picture, a side-splitting cat in "Old Mother Hubbard," a flute-playing dog taking himself quite too seriously in the same book, three comic bears dancing against a crimson background, and a little bear tobogganning, with each particular hair flying behind in the wind, in "The Three Bears"; a porcupine, apparently Irish, and of the laboring class, nonchalantly smoking a clay pipe, and a page full of animals at afternoon tea in "The Zoo," containing a social satire. And I cannot forget the end-paper showing Mary's lamb sitting shivering and miserable in a woolen bath-robe just after being sheared. In none of these is the point of similarity with the child forgotten which enables him to get his feeling focused with his knowledge; Denslow knows the baby mind.

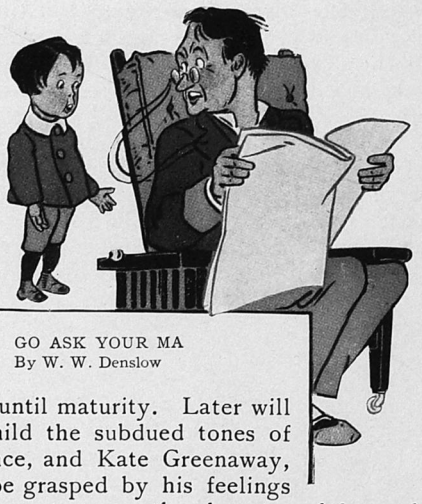
In the second period of taste, the grotesque action in his books may become even more vagarious, even extreme, as the child has advanced to the realization that many actions and things lie out of his possibility, and it amuses him to see them appear within the child power. He also recognizes animals and inanimate objects doing things outside their province, such as the polite bowing egg in "Humpty Dumpty" on page 382, and he is greatly pleased at the fun as well as morally awakened to sympathy. And the corresponding advancement artistically is his being cognizant, and enjoying the breaking up of color into designs. Here Denslow's work is superb.



MIGHT BELONG TO TAMMANY
By W. W. Denslow

In the third period, the humor of differentiation is carried still further with the creation of impossible personages, such as Denslow's conceptions of the tin-woodman, and the scarecrow, in "The Wizard of Oz," since carried out so admirably in the comic opera founded on that book, the fun of the thing for the child lying in making them plausible by relating them to daily life.

And after this period of love for the grotesque, the imagination of a child begins to be independent, to go to regions that he never tells of, and here may come



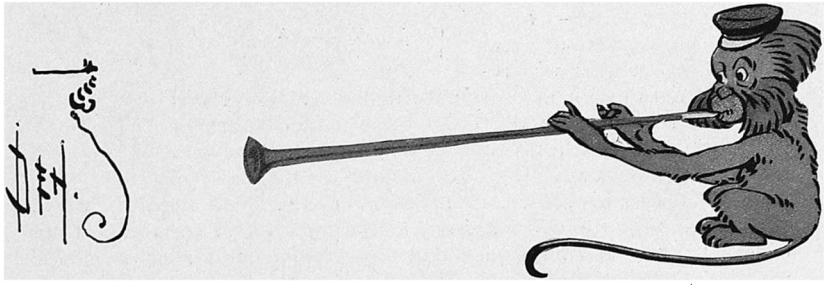
GO ASK YOUR MA
By W. W. Denslow

the help in pictures of varied and soaring details that in themselves stimulate the imagination to knowledge and flight. Given only at the right time, such things as the form of clouds, minutiæ of beautiful houses, decorative objects, details of carpets, walls, stuffs—especially in something so near to their hearts as the costumes of children themselves—would make an atmosphere of great value, and one that will remain defined in their memory until maturity. Later will come the time to give the child the subdued tones of Boutet de Monvel, for instance, and Kate Greenaway, whose delicate art may then be grasped by his feelings and rendered by his soul. Age must govern the character of the work.

By this time the child has reached a place where certain portions of great works having topics that appeal to a child may be shared with him. The time has come when he can appreciate books of children as well as books for children.

Mr. Denslow's theory and practice in this regard bears out from all these periods many points in the old nursery classics which have become so familiar to us that we no longer notice them. They have become as much a matter of course as war among Christian nations, capital punishment, and other relics of barbarism. He has actually had the audacity, from deep conviction, to *expurgate* "Mother Goose," and all fairy stories containing bloodshed, cruelty, coarseness, in fact, any episodes which might frighten children. And when one comes to think of it, these "yarns of a past age" abound with recitals of actual crime. Let Mr. Denslow give an instance: "See what a perfectly outrageous thing is Jack and the Bean-Stalk. A lad gains admittance to a man's house under false pretense, through lying and deceit, imposing on the sympathy of the man's wife, then he commits theft upon theft. He is a confidence man, a sneak-thief, and a burglar. After which, when the man attempts to defend his property, he is slain by the hero, (?) who not only commits murder, but mutilates the corpse, much to the delight of his mother." Probably to not one mother in a thousand has the idea occurred that perhaps it would be just as well to modify these legends as well as some of the Old Testament stories, yet the point is an important one, and not only for especially sensitive children, for every child mind is sensitive in the beginning.

Mr. Denslow does not bring about his reforms in a namby-pamby, bungling way, but sails around this dangerous literary corner in a delightfully humorous fashion. The giant in "Jack and the Bean-Stalk" (no longer "Jack the Giant-Killer") turns out to be not so terrible after all, but as good-natured as giants usually are. Jack tames him thoroughly and he does useful odd jobs, such as shingling the cottage without using ladders. At last he lands in a side-show where with Jack on his knee he sells his photographs at ten cents each. The wolf in "Little Red Riding-Hood" also becomes domesticated, and there is no eating of grandma. Reformed, and with a white tie about his neck, he becomes an invaluable watch-dog. Even



LAUDAMUS CREATOREM NOSTRUM

"Baby Bunting" does not escape Mr. Denslow, as witness his new version, accompanying a picture of a disconsolate hunter looking after a rabbit disappearing in the distance.

"By, baby bunting,
Daddy's gone a-hunting,
He'll never get this rabbit's skin
To wrap the baby bunting in!"

"Color, fun, and action" are Denslow's watchwords, and the color is good, especially in the later books, action there certainly is in abundance, as an instance the inimitable liveliness in the drawing of the man springing out of bed "to see what was the matter" in "The Night before Christmas." As for the fun it is exuberant and pervasive, from "Father Goose" and "Mother Goose" to the new series from which these illustrations are made. One often wishes for more correctness in the drawing, and a lack of academic training is often evident, but the man starts out for certain original, definite ends and gains them; his first success, by the way, being made in Chicago. Perhaps a strict course before the cast and the life model would have thwarted some of his ideas, and dampened some of his enthusiasm. And perhaps not—who can tell? The covers, though doubtless practical, are often not as artistic as could be desired for these important

positions, nor as truly decorative as Mr. Denslow can be, for instance in many of his end-papers. But Mr. Denslow gets his public, holds his public, and does it by the good blood of his art. There is a distinct philosophy of decoration to follow the philosophy of the texts put before a child. The artist who makes books for children, not of children, has a great problem confronting him, for after all there is nothing more limited than a child's understanding, which pedagogy keeps within, and yet behold the wonders of individuality there. The artist who chooses to work for children must abide within the same boundary, yet must he have the same wealth of imagination. This is where his liberty lies. And great artists usually ask no other freedom.

J. M. BOWLES.

MISCELLANEOUS ART NEWS ITEMS

Not content with the industrial and scientific establishments for art instruction which she already possesses, Bavaria is seeking to found a central affair at Munich, which will be somewhat the same kind of combined museum and national schools as the Victoria and Albert Institute in England. Kommerzienrath Krause has led the donations with twenty-five thousand dollars, and Luitpold, the Prince Regent, has offered the rooms of the old National Museum to the committee of organization. Herr Oscar von Miller, president of the Bavarian Society of Engineers, is the leading spirit in the enterprise and he has been able to enlist the sympathy of the government and various societies. At the instigation of Herr Pettenkofer the scientific and philosophical instruments collected by the Bavarian Academy of Science will be turned over to the new organization; models and other exhibits will come in from private individuals, manufacturers, and special organizations. It is proposed to have this museum of science and art to a certain extent under the protection of government, so that institutes of technology, special departments, and clubs of artists and scientists will be inclined to make offerings. In order to raise the funds necessary for its proper foundation and maintenance a society is to be formed which will manage it under supervision of the state.

The museum of Grenoble has added to its antiquities a remarkable Roman mosaic, discovered at Vienne (Isere), buried in a garden. The central medallion is illustrated with the classic story of Hylas, and the surface measurement of the whole piece, which is, unfortunately, not perfect, is stated to be about four meters eighty centimeters each side. The work has excited widespread interest among antiquaries and experts.

Professor Franz Mikhoff of the Vienna University has been requested by the Vienna Academy of Science to visit the principal galleries of Europe with the purpose of ascertaining how many of the paintings attributed to Raphael are genuine.